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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0200
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000092

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SUBJECT: ON THE RIGHT TRACK: PDAS MOON VISIT HIGHLIGHTS

U.S.-BANGLADESH CONVERGENCE

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

11. (C) In January 21 meetings at the Foreign Ministry, SCA Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Moon and the Ambassador underscored opportunities for closer U.S.- Bangladesh cooperation on a wide range of issues including regional integration, refugees, and multilateral issues. The Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary Quayes separately explained that Bangladesh,s rapprochement with India reflected an intent to build closer links throughout the region. The Foreign Secretary acknowledged differences on some multilateral issues, reiterating the GOB,s position against UN country-specific human rights resolutions and uncertainty about Kosovo recognition. The Foreign Secretary reaffirmed Bangladesh,s reluctance to document Rohingya refugees but left the door open for further efforts to improve the plight of the refugees while urging greater repatriation efforts.
End Summary.

A Friend of the United States

12. (C) During a January 21 meeting, PDAS Moon told FM Dipu Moni that he was encouraged by the strength of U.S.-Bangladesh relations and was pleased to be paying his first visit to Dhaka. The Foreign Minister concurred, adding that the U.S. and Bangladesh agreed on most issues in international fora. She noted that when the U.S. Government recognized &Bangladesh as a friend it is a source of great strength8 for her country. The Foreign Minister emphasized that the Awami League government had worked hard to improve Bangladesh,s relations with others in the region and to better integrate South Asia as a whole. Moni welcomed additional U.S. support and repeated previous invitations for Secretary Clinton and President Obama to visit Bangladesh.

Indo-Bangladesh relations: A new beginning?

13. (C) PDAS Moon welcomed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina,s successful visit to India and expressed hope for greater cooperation between the two countries. Foreign Minister Moni emphasized that the Government of Bangladesh sought greater cooperation in the South Asia region and not just an improvement in bilateral ties with India.

14. (C) In their earlier meeting, Foreign Secretary Quayes told PDAS Moon that Bangladesh could address the great power disparities with India in one of two ways. The first was that Bangladesh, as a relatively powerless country, could turn inward and shut itself off from the rest of the world. The other would be to focus on regional integration and treat the border as a &frontier of opportunity8 whereby India

could become part of our space and Bangladesh could be part of India, s. He opined these polar opposite approaches had their roots in the partition of India, and reflected the dominant streams of thought at the time: the two-nation theory which divided people along religious lines or the idea that Bengalis should be treated as a composite whole irrespective of religion. FS Quayes added that neither the GOB nor the GOI had any insoluble demands and that the primary issue in negotiations between the two countries had been how to properly sequence the steps towards closer cooperation. He reiterated that the bilateral discussions were part of a broader effort GOB towards greater regional integration.

United Nations Votes

15. (C) PDAS Moon expressed to FS Quayes disappointment at Bangladesh, s decision to oppose country specific UN Human Rights resolutions on Burma, North Korea and Iran. With regard to the latter, PDAS Moon noted the support the resolution had received from several states in the Organization of Islamic Conference. Quayes insisted that Bangladesh wanted to build a foreign policy based on values. However, Quayes noted, the UN General Assembly and other constituent bodies had passed several rounds of country specific resolutions, which Bangladesh, as a rule, opposed. He asserted that Bangladesh, s vote did not reflect a broader position, but instead pointed to the need for other avenues for engagement. The FS explained that in the case of the UN vote on the human rights situation in Burma, Bangladesh had to take into consideration its relations with a country with which it shared a border and a number of outstanding

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bilateral issues. The Ambassador pointed out that in regard to Iran, Bangladesh had little to lose politically given fellow OIC-member Saudi Arabia, s support for the resolution and the absence of any close linkages like Burma). Moon added that human rights issues were internationally accepted principles and that the world community must unite in their favor.

Rohingya Refugees

16. (C) PDAS Moon told the Foreign Secretary the U.S. Government wished to see greater numbers of Rohingya properly documented and was willing to offer assistance. The Foreign Secretary reiterated the GOB, s adherence to the principle of non-refoulement of refugees. He mentioned that he had recently visited the refugee camps and added that Bangladesh was in a bind with regard to the Rohingya, as it had reason to believe that many who had been repatriated earlier had not stayed in Burma. He argued that formal registration under the auspices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees would unduly complicate matters and create difficulties, given local sentiment against the Rohingya. Bangladesh was looking along with the International Organization for Migration at alternatives to formal registration. Quayes called for the international community to encourage Burma to ensure proper repatriation of refugees in order to avoid the endless cycle of repatriation and protection. He said the Government of Burma and donors should provide more development assistance to reintegrate the Rohingya population.

Kosovo Recognition

17. (C) The Ambassador and PDAS Moon raised the issue of Kosovo recognition with the Foreign Secretary, who said Bangladesh had not yet made a decision whether it would recognize Kosovo. Quayes said he valued the U.S. viewpoint and admitted that the arguments for recognition were compelling. However, Bangladesh was concerned about the security of small countries and the precedent that would be created for all states facing ethnic problems by the recognition of Kosovo.

Comment

18. (C) Despite disappointing votes by Bangladesh in the UN, the GOB recognizes its shared interests and values with the United States. Bangladesh,s effort to improve relations with India and other South Asian countries, promoting further regional economic integration and security cooperation, is in the direct U.S. national interest. While domestic political considerations impede GOB documentation of Rohingyas, it was encouraging to hear that Bangladesh was considering alternatives to encourage more durable repatriation efforts. For now, Bangladesh,s policy on Iran and Kosovo remains hostage to the bureaucracy. Post will continue to encourage improved regional ties, practical steps to help the Rohingyas, and more UN votes consistent with U.S. interests.
MORIARTY